



# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

Experiential learning aims at bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world. It enables the student to bring out his innate potential to face the present day realities in which he lives. It also helps to develop variety of skills such as social, psychological, intellectual etc. Leadership is one of the prime constructs happen within the student through experiential learning process. An attempt is made here to suggest a design for leadership development through experiential learning.

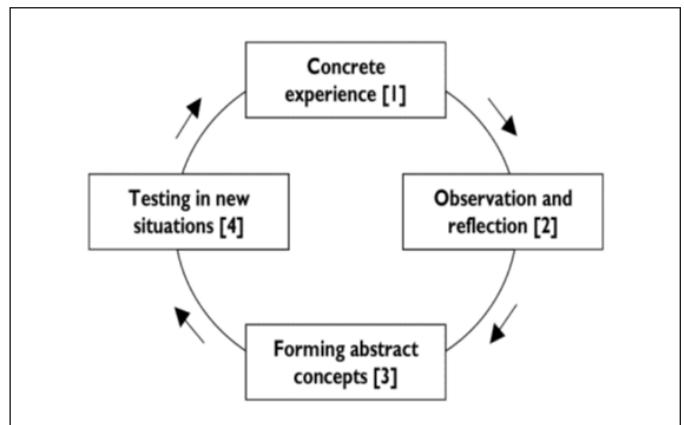
## INTRODUCTION:

Education is the main process of making an individual efficient in dealing with the challenges of life and learning is the scientific process of acquiring skills and potentialities through valuable experiences. Effective learning is possible only through the chaining of better learning experiences and experiential learning plays a main role in shaping an individual to be a better responsible citizen and an active member of society. Better learning opens our mind and expands our horizons, which place crucial role in shaping us to be good and responsible personalities. Experiential learning is really cultivating a lot of values among the learners and through that we can develop a lot of leadership qualities like hard work, dedication, self-confidence, and sharing. Leadership qualities are very essential for a democratic society and each individual should acquire better qualities of a good leader. Through experiential learning, we can easily develop these qualities in an effective manner. Traditional schooling views the teacher and text as experts and the learner as a passive recipient of that expertise. By contrast, experiential learning promotes involvement in the real world and defines the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning. The process of learning takes precedence over the behavioural outcomes, and is based on the premise that learning is a continuous process, with experience at its foundation. Better experiences can enrich and enlighten the entire aspects of that continuous activity to a great one.

### Experiential Learning:

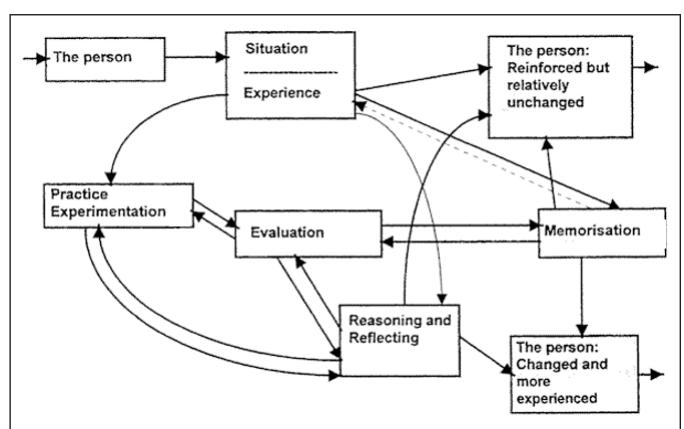
An effective theory is the basis of systematic knowledge to do something in an attractive manner. Such a systematic and scientific approach can develop better perspectives of knowledge construction inside and outside the classroom. One of the prominent concepts in that direction is experiential learning which can generate better and fruitful interaction in the entire aspects of knowledge construction. Experiential Learning defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience". Experiential learning is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension among the four learning modes. This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner "touches all the bases" experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Experiential learning posits that learning is the major determinant of human development and how individuals learn shapes the course of their personal development

Kolb's (1984) formulation of Experiential Learning draws on the works of prominent educational and organizational scholars including John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, who share the common view that learning involves integrating experience with concepts and linking observations to actions. Experiential education, or "learning by doing," is the process of actively engaging students in an authentic experience that has benefits and consequences. Students make discoveries and experiment with knowledge themselves, instead of hearing or reading about the experiences of others. Students also reflect on their experiences, thus developing new skills, attitudes, and ways of thinking and experiential education empowers students to take responsibility for their own learning. The following model on experiential learning (kolb) helps us learn from our experiences.



Kolb's four-stage learning cycle shows how experience is translated through reflection into concepts, which in turn are used as guides for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences. The first stage, *concrete experience* (CE), is where the learner actively experiences an activity such as a lab session or field work. The second stage, *reflective observation* (RO), is when the learner consciously reflects back on that experience. The third stage, *abstract conceptualization* (AC), is where the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory or model of what is observed. The fourth stage, *active experimentation* (AE), is where the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience.

Jarvis,(1987,1995) another important educational thinker, strengthening the concept of experiential learning set out to show that there are a number of responses to the potential learning situation. He used Kolb's model with a number of different adult groups and asked them to explore it based on their own experience of learning. He was then able to develop a model of which allowed different routes. Some of these are non-learning, some non-reflective learning, and some reflective learning.



Jarvis' contribution in this field made some complication and constraints about the concept of experiential learning. But his innovative efforts are really valuable

in developing the potentialities of experiential learning concepts.

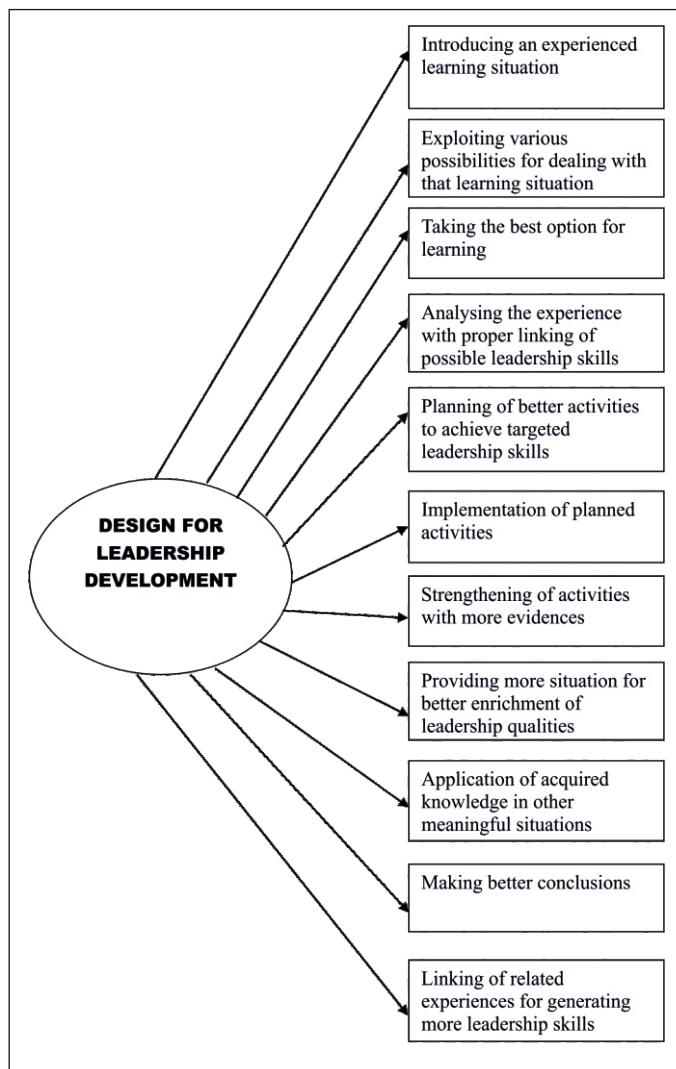
#### **Leadership development based on Experiential Learning:**

Leadership development is highly a personal learning experience, providing new insights into one's strengths as a leader as well as the key areas to work on for further development. The respective input, skill and responsibilities of a facilitator in this learning process have the potential to make the leadership development intervention a relevant and lasting experience.

Good leaders never cease to learn and taking personal responsibility for one's own learning remains a central tenet in any personal development initiative. In the current milieu of diversity, complexities and international competition, leaders who are capable of understanding, functioning and managing in the global environment are a valuable, rare, and inimitable resource that can offer firms a competitive advantage. The growing emphasis on experiential approaches to global leader development may be attributed to the importance accrued to international experience. Challenging work experiences put individuals in dynamic settings where they must solve complex problems and make choices under conditions of risk and uncertainty. The developmental value of experience is well documented across a variety of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies.

In making leadership development training effective, it should also combine experiential classroom style programs and business school style coursework. It should also include reflective journaling, executive coaching as well as continuous mentoring. It should also involve goal setting that should follow an assessment of key developmental needs. An effective leadership development training should have not only the component of experiential learning but should also focus on self-efficacy which include the right training and coaching as well as visioning which aims to develop the ability of the leader to formulate a clear image. This image should reflect the aspired future of the organization based on skills of the leader that heads it. To ensure the success of leadership development training, an effective program is needed. It should be designed in way that integrates a range of developmental experiences over a given period of time. The program should also include monitoring scheme and gathering of feedback.

#### **Design for developing leadership quality through experiential learning:**



#### **Activities related to leadership development through experiential learning:**

A series of activities are suggested for experiential learning and all these activi-

ties are really focusing the learner participation up to higher level. Experiential learning is a learner centered and activity oriented learning strategy. The learners are really dominating the entire proceedings of learning process. Experiential learning is paving better ways of inter and intra personal communicative situations inside and outside the classrooms. Better communication skills can be developed through better sequencing of experiential learning activities.

Powerful and deep experiences with emotional backup can cultivate a lot of values and skills among the learners. Conducting role play is an excellent example of experiential learning and through its activities we can strengthen communication skills as well as linguistic and logical intelligence of learners. Dramatization of textual activities is another important way of experiential learning. While dramatization a lot of abilities will improve, which include organizational capacity, bodily and kinaesthetic intelligence, linguistic intelligence and logical thinking. The creative skills also develop to a higher level with the impact of these activities. Conducting seminars, debates and discussions are also a part of experiential learning. These activities are also very helpful in generating more knowledge and better outlook towards future.

Lecturing and simulation are also another important ways of experiential learning. All these activities are helpful in developing leadership skills of the learners. The ability to make better decisions, the capacity to plan and implement programs, knowledge of facts, motivation and organizing abilities can also be empowered through experiential learning.

Better case studies, conducting research type projects, inquiry learning type activities, experiences through simple and higher level experiments, making better observations, making better analysis and decisions are other types of experiential learning activities. Field trips, interviews, experiences through audio-visual technology etc. are another ways of getting knowledge through experiential learning. All these activities can help in developing leadership quality and self-confidence in the learner. Integrity, dedication, magnanimity, humility, openness and assertiveness are the important skills of leadership. Through experiential learning we can easily generate these skills among the learners in an attractive manner. Sympathy and empathy, the other qualities of a leader can also be charged through experiential learning.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Experiential learning is the one of the most striking ways of learning. This process is enriched with a lot of personal involvement and it is a learner-initiated one. Through this process, there is enough provision for self-evaluation of the learner which is one of the most important psychological and philosophical activities for individual development. The social acceptance of an individual is very important in democratic society. Better sharing of emotional feeling and thoughts is helpful in making a person a socially accepted individual. Experiential learning is primarily based upon direct confrontation with practical, social and personal or research problems. A well balanced integrated personality with wider perspective of values and ideologies is the jewel-like goal of education which is really meant for creating a better future society. Such a society is badly in need of better leaders with high potentialities. Experiential learning is the best answer to this need and it can generate superb skills of leadership in a natural and coherent manner. Through this way of learning our class rooms becomes the nucleus of leadership training which is inevitable for a democratic, cultural and progressive society.

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